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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 CONAKRY 001136

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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [ELAB](#) [ASEC](#) [GV](#)
SUBJECT: UNION LEADER SAYS NO STRIKES PLANNED, BUT
SITUATION IS GRIM

Classified By: POL/ECON CHIEF SHANNON CAZEAU FOR REASON 1.4 (B) AND (D)

¶1. (SBU) SUMMARY. The leader of Guinea,s largest labor union painted a grim picture of the country,s political and economic situation in a meeting with poloff, but said that the unions are not planning any strikes in the near future. She added that the international community can play an important role in staving off further unrest by speaking frankly to key leaders and urging action. END SUMMARY.

¶2. (SBU) On October 4, poloff met with Elhadja Bah Diallo Rabiattou Serah, Secretary General of the CNTG (National Confederation of Guinean workers) labor union at her private residence. The CNTG is Guinea,s largest union, representing approximately 100,000 government workers. Rabiattou is also co-chair of the inter-syndicale, an organized labor association consisting of the CNTG, the USTG (Labor Union of Guinean Workers) 67,000 members), the ONSLG (National Organization of Independent Labor of Guinea) small membership), and the UDTG (Democratic Union of Guinea Workers) small membership). The inter-syndicale, under the leadership of Rabiattou and her co-chair, Dr. Ibrahim Fofana, Secretary General of the USTG, led Guinea,s January/February

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2007 strikes.

BIO NOTES

¶3. (SBU) Rabiattou arrived at the meeting under the escort of her personal, armed bodyguard who was wearing army fatigues. Her home is modest, but comfortable. At least a dozen people, many of them children, were milling about the compound. Rabiattou introduced one young girl as her daughter from Liberia and mentioned that most of the other people there were also family members, which she reportedly supports financially. Rabiattou belongs to the Peuhl ethnic group by birth, but was raised in Soussou culture.

¶4. (SBU) Widowed a few years ago, Rabiattou,s husband was a high-ranking official within the Ministry of Interior and Security. During his career, he served as the National Director of Police and as the Governor of Mamou. A number of the family members living with Rabiattou are reportedly members of the military or police forces.

FROM BAD TO WORSE

¶5. (SBU) Rabiattou was relaxed and spoke candidly. She noted that her opinions did not necessarily reflect the official position of the CNTG or the inter-syndicale.

¶6. (C) Rabiadou said that Guinea,s political and economic situation is worse than it was before the January/February strikes. Referring to Prime Minister Lansana Kouyate,s failure to achieve the key objectives of the January 27 Accords, Rabiadou said &the protocol has not been respected; we are not on the path of change.8 She added that the country,s population is seriously divided, pointing to ideological divisions among youth groups, political parties, civil society organizations, and the unions. &Everything is sick,8 she said. &If we all continue to focus on our individual agendas, the country will not advance.8 Despite her apparent frustration with the current situation, Rabiadou stated that the unions are not planning any strikes in the foreseeable future.

NO CONFIDENCE IN ELECTIONS

¶7. (C) With respect to elections, Rabiadou said that the population lacks confidence in the government and in the individual political parties. Alluding to the government,s perceived lack of political will for elections, she expressed doubt as to whether the elections could be organized transparently. She pointed to the fact that the Independent National Electoral Commission (CENI) has not been established and nothing has been done to develop the necessary electoral lists.

UNIONS FRAGMENTING

¶8. (C) Rabiadou said the unions are becoming increasingly fragmented. &We are the same unions, she said, but we no longer speak the same language.8 She added that some union members are being bribed by the government (Note) although

CONAKRY 00001136 002 OF 002

poloff pressed for details, she would not specify the source of bribes) as part of a political strategy to destabilize the unions as a political force. Rabiadou named Yamoudou Toure specifically, who is the Secretary General of the ONSLG, saying that he is on someone,s payroll and is actively trying to split the unions. She also suggested that he is acting as an informant.

KOUYATE,S PLAYING POLITICAL GAME

¶9. (C) Commenting on Kouyate,s governance over the last six months, Rabiadou said that he has essentially accomplished nothing. Referring to the current power struggle between the prime minister and the president, Rabiadou said that if Kouyate had been assertive in the very beginning and assumed his role as head of government, the key objectives of the January 27 Accords would have already been accomplished. &He,s playing a political game,8 she said, &and it may be too late now.8 She added that Kouyate had the political support in the beginning, but his current support is questionable. &If Conte replaced him tomorrow, I doubt that people would be in the streets protesting,8 she said.

¶10. (C) Rabiadou expressed skepticism as to Kouyate,s ultimate objectives, pointing to his recent visit to Libya and his frequent interaction with Libyan officials. She said that people know that Kaddafi supported Liberian President Charles Taylor and some are questioning Kouyate,s motives. Rabiadou mentioned her recent visit to the Guinea-Sierra Leone border and suggested that mercenaries are easily bought and may be quietly entering the country.

¶11. (C) Frustrated with Kouyate,s lack of progress and the political infighting plaguing the unions and other organizations, Rabiadou said that her personal strategy is to

lay low. &More and more, I am simply observing and keeping my mouth shut, she said.⁸ She said she is also maintaining her distance from overt political movements. Rabiadou added that she is afraid and is actively seeking to send her children out of the country, fearing the possibility of violent retaliation for her political activities.

WE NEED A REALITY CHECK

¶12. (C) Rabiadou said that the Guinea is still a country in crisis and the international community needs to emphasize that the political and economic crisis remains a reality. &Now is the time to save the country before it is too late,⁸ she said. Rabiadou said that the international community can play an important role by maintaining focus on Guinea,s &>true condition⁸ and speaking forthrightly to the president and the prime minister. She added that Conte is acting irresponsibly by completely blocking Kouyate. &Someone needs to ask Conte why he is blocking Kouyate. At the same time, someone needs to tell Kouyate to be more assertive,⁸ she said.

¶13. (SBU) Rabiadou ended the discussion with a local proverb) &if you ask somebody to wash your back, you can,t expect them to wash your stomach too,⁸ meaning that Guinea needs outside assistance, but ultimately must help itself.

COMMENT

¶14. (C) Rabiadou,s comments suggest that she may be distancing herself from Kouyate and his administration and possibly from other union leaders. Though her general outlook was grim, Rabiadou seemed to believe that a peaceful transition was still possible, but that the country walks a delicate path. END COMMENT.
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